



# The Journey

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AW2 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

April 2004 - April 2009

## AW2 Transition

By Lee McMahon, AW2 Stratcom Booz Allen Hamilton Contractor

Without teamwork, there would be no U.S. Army. Teamwork is at the center of all we do. Whether it's an infantry squad patrolling foreign roads or Families at home supporting

Warrior Transition Office (WTO). AW2 will continue to serve the most severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and their Families. The only difference is now AW2 is part of a larger team with the same dedicated mission.



AW2 Family – The Davises.

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."*

– Helen Keller

them—we do our best work when we're united. So too is the case for Army warrior care.

In January 2009, the Army brought together three organizations under the Warrior Transition Command (WTC). The three organizations—which have the singular mission of supporting wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and Families—were the Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2), Warrior Care and Transition Office (WCTO), and

care under the purview of the Army Medical Department. With the evolving nature of warrior care, this is a move that just made sense. From the battlefield to the home front, MEDCOM will have the oversight and the unified resources to take care of Soldiers and Families.

One thing that will not change is AW2's dedication and commitment to providing personalized support to the most severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and their

Families wherever they are located for as long as it takes. It is a commitment AW2 has taken seriously since its inception in 2004, and it is a commitment Army leadership fully supports.

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## 2009 AW2 Annual Training

By COL Jim Rice, AW2 Director

**T**he business of caring for wounded Soldiers and their Families is dynamic and ever changing. As part of our commitment to our Soldiers and their Families, we need to ensure our staff has the knowledge, resources, and tools they need to support our Soldiers and their Families. Part of this commitment is continuing our own education and training.

“We are AW2,” the 2009 AW2 Annual Training Conference, included our entire AW2 staff. This year, everyone participated and in some cases staff also instructed, as we have much expertise to share within our own staff. This year’s all-staff training was not the usual Annual Training. Although we presented updates involving wounded warrior care, we also held branch specific training, Military

Treatment Facility/Department of Veterans Affairs/Warrior Transition Unit/Soldier Family Assistance Center specific training, regional breakout sessions, and team building exercises. I directed our training staff to think outside the box. This comprehensive training was built with AW2 staff ideas.

All AW2 staff was in San Antonio, TX, from April 27-May 2, 2009. This was a great time for staff to learn and reconnect with colleagues and refresh their knowledge base. As I thought about our 2009 AW2 Annual Training, I thought back to our 2008 Symposium theme, “I am AW2.” With this new training, it was “We are AW2.” Together, we provide personalized support to the Army’s most severely wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers and their Families.

Together we learn from each other and make our AW2 Team stronger and more knowledgeable.



Meredith Myers, AW2 Advocate Serco Contractor, worked with AW2 staff at the 2008 Annual Training in Alexandria, VA, April 2008.

## 2009 AW2 Symposium: Let Your Voice be Heard

By SGM Brent R. Jurgensen, AW2 Sergeant Major

**T**he 2009 AW2 Symposium is quickly approaching. AW2 conducts annual symposiums to identify and develop recommendations regarding issues which impact the health, recovery, rehabilitation, transition, and welfare of AW2 Soldiers, Family members, and caregivers. The conference is scheduled for July 8-14 in San Antonio, TX. The Army has learned over the years that supporting the Family is essential to a Soldier’s recovery and is illustrated in the Army’s “Family Covenant.”

AW2 is now accepting a “Call for Issues” and “Call for Delegates” from all AW2 Soldiers, Family members, caregivers, and AW2 staff members. This is your opportunity to influence and change policies, planning, and procedures related to warrior care and



SGT Antwain Vaughn with his daughter at the AW2 Symposium in Indianapolis, IN, June 2008.

transition for severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and their Families. Issues selected at previous symposiums have been brought to the attention of government, Army and veteran’s organizations resulting in positive changes and ongoing dialogue. To participate please complete a form, visit [www.AW2.army.mil](http://www.AW2.army.mil).

I encourage you to submit a “Call for Issue/Call for Delegate” form so that your voice can be heard. This is your chance to be a part of the process and help affect change for other AW2 Soldiers and Family members in the program. Therefore, this year’s symposium, “I am AW2,” focuses on the Family, Continue on Active Duty/Continue on Active Reserve (COAD/COAR), transition, Department of Veterans Affairs, careers, and medical issues.

Also, there are many exciting events planned for this year’s symposium. If you attend the meeting, you will be able to meet with veteran’s services organizations, employers, and various program representatives within the Army. Several social events are also being planned by AW2. In addition, AW2 is teaming up with the National Military Family Association (NMFA) to host Operation Purple®—a six-day urban adventure camp for children ages six to seventeen. Daycare will be provided for children under the age of six. Both daycare and Operation Purple® are provided at no cost. For more details, please contact your Advocate.

For more details on the AW2 Symposium 2009, visit [www.AW2.army.mil](http://www.AW2.army.mil) or contact your Advocate.

Be sure to visit [www.AW2.army.mil](http://www.AW2.army.mil) for updates on the 2009 Symposium. We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio.

## AW2 Career and Education Section Opens Doors

By Tania Meireles, AW2 Stratcom Booz Allen Hamilton Contractor

**T**he AW2 Career and Education Section works to find more opportunities to help AW2 Soldiers and Families identify career opportunities and educational programs. An example of this collaborative effort was at last year's AW2 Symposium. The AW2 Symposium is week-long event that is part of the Army's overall mission to improve the care of wounded Soldiers and their Families. The 2008 AW2 Symposium included an exhibit hall and career forum with more than 15 veteran service organizations, nonprofits, corporations, and Army programs that provided one-on-one support to AW2 Soldiers and Families.

### Standing in the Door Way

AW2 Soldier SFC Derek Duplisea visited the exhibit hall and career forum while at the Symposium and spoke with Bob Guth, Director of Labor Relations at Raytheon Missile Systems (RMS) in Tucson, AZ, about employment opportunities. Guth gave him the literature about the positions and spoke about what RMS was doing to hire wounded warriors. RMS is a technology-based company that continues to recruit qualified individuals in engineering disciplines, finance, security operations, and quality assurance.

"The Wounded Warrior Program at RMS-Tucson was created to address the concern of several senior level executives (some former military) that RMS was missing an opportunity to 'give back' to those who have given so much to support the freedoms we all enjoy in this country," said Guth.

Duplisea was retiring from the Army and had already accepted another job at the time but later heard about Raytheon's search for someone to fill the Wounded Warrior Liaison position in Tucson, AZ. Since he had learned about the program at the Symposium and was a wounded warrior, he decided to apply for the position. Within a short period of time, he was offered an interview, interviewed by eight people, and offered the position.



Carol Jarvis (left), Derek Duplisea (center), and Bob Guth (right) work together at Raytheon Missile Systems.

### Walking Through the Door

Duplisea, Project Manager and Wounded Warrior Liaison for the RMS Wounded Warrior Program, supports what they call Operation Phoenix (RMS Military Relations). As part of his job duties, Duplisea has visited all four wounded warrior programs within the military and met with the local Department of Veterans Affairs, Transition Assistance Programs, Army Career and Alumni Program, and Warrior Transition Unit representatives. Duplisea attends military career fairs, develops the RMS Wounded Warrior Program, and spreads the word to other Raytheon companies.

"The program has set a goal to hire 5-10 wounded warriors by the end of 2009," said Duplisea. "To be eligible for the program, wounded warriors must have been severely wounded or injured in OIF, OEF, or GWOT and be a member of their branch's wounded warrior program. Spouses and/or caregivers may also qualify for the program if the wounded warrior's injuries are so severe that they cannot work or gain employment. The wounded warrior must be qualified for any future job openings at RMS. Candidates can have a degree and experience that qualifies them for an open position or may qualify for a position through on-the-job training and job specific training."

### Opening Doors

The AW2 Career and Education Section assists AW2 Soldiers and Families move to a new chapter in their lives by helping them find a new and rewarding career. The AW2 Career and Education Section works closely with federal, state, and local organizations and corporations, such as RMS, to create employment and

educational opportunities for Soldiers and their Families. Once an employment opportunity is discovered, the AW2 Career and Education Section works to expedite the career process to provide Soldiers and Families with meaningful employment.

"RMS has an excellent working relationship with AW2," said Guth. "We look to the AW2 organization to spread the word inside the community about the opportunities we have to offer and to assist us in recruiting viable candidates. At the end of the day our goal is the same, to assist our wounded warrior community by offering support and meaningful job opportunities in the civilian environment."

"I also have a great working relationship with my AW2 Advocate Sergio Arellano here in Tucson, AZ," said Duplisea. "AW2 has referred several Army wounded warriors to me, and I'm currently working with one now that lives here in Tucson, AZ."

### Finding a Career and/or Furthering Education

The AW2 Career and Education Section can help AW2 Soldiers and Families develop objective, informed goals and decisions, whether interested in entering the job market or expanding education. To find out more, contact the AW2 Career and Education Section at [AW2careerprogram@conus.army.mil](mailto:AW2careerprogram@conus.army.mil).

# AW2 Collaboration with National Organization on Disability

By Tania Meireles, AW2 Stratcom Booz Allen Hamilton Contractor

**A**W2 Career and Education Section focuses on helping AW2 Soldiers enter new or resume productive careers and is intended to help fill the void of effective career services for AW2 Soldiers and Families. As part of this effort, AW2 formed a public-private collaboration with the National Organization on Disability (NOD). In this pilot program, AW2 and NOD will provide intensive, pro-active, and continuing career services to AW2 Soldiers and Family members for three years at three sites.

AW2 and NOD strive to develop effective ways of helping severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and Family members pursue careers, with the goal of improving their educational and employment outcomes, and to provide the knowledge gained to Army and its allies to act upon.

“The three sites for our pilot program are Dallas/Fort Worth, TX; Colorado Springs,

CO; and Fayetteville, NC,” said Rose Marie Tinker, AW2 Career Coordinator and NOD project officer. “These areas were chosen based upon their relatively high population of severely wounded Soldiers, the commitment of local Army personnel, job market conditions, and supportive local foundations. The collaboration is funded by 16 foundations and a corporate donor.”



Career Specialists—full-time caseworkers with a background in workforce development—are the fulcrum of the collaboration. The Career Specialists will be advisors, advocates, and facilitators for AW2 Soldiers and Families, helping them navigate through and link effectively with the array of career services and educational resources available to them in each locale. In each site,

the Career Specialists assist Soldiers to assess their career interests and skills; to make career plans; to find, enter, and succeed at additional schooling or skills training; to enter full- or part-time, volunteer or paid employment; and, once working, to advance in such employment.

The Army recognized that career services were part of the challenge facing AW2 Soldiers and that something new and different was required on this front. The AW2 and NOD collaboration endeavors to help AW2 Soldiers and Families acquire the education and skills, support services, and access to employment opportunities needed to resume or embark on new careers.

For additional information contact Rose Marie Tinker, AW2 NOD project officer at [rose.tinker@us.army.mil](mailto:rose.tinker@us.army.mil) or call (703) 325-0579.

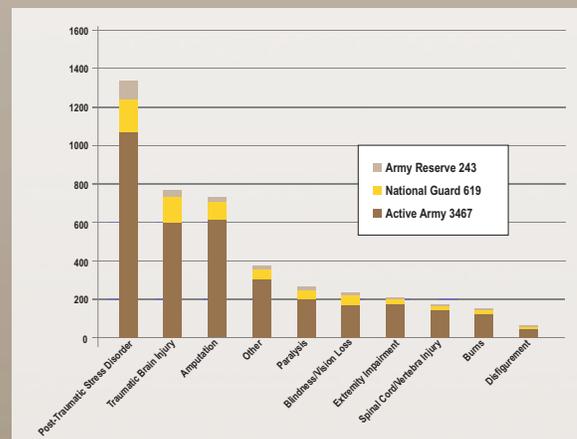
## AW2 Soldier Population at a Glance

Between December 2, 2008, and April 1, 2009, the AW2 Soldier population grew from approximately 3722 to 4329.

Also during this time period, traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) increased to approximately the same level as amputations.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) remains the most prevalent injury category among AW2 Soldiers.

## Injury Categories by Component As of April 1, 2009



\*Data Source(s): Wounded Warrior Accountability System (WWAS); AW2 database

# AW2 Soldier Goes on Trip of a Lifetime—to Antarctica

By Tania Meireles, AW2 Stratcom Booz Allen Hamilton Contractor

**R**etired SSG Ryan Caldwell was vacationing in Alaska when he met an underwater photographer and documentary film maker. Caldwell had always been interested in photography and was eager to learn from a professional. The photographer befriended Caldwell and invited him to Antarctica for two and a half months as his guest to learn all he could from him.

“I wanted to pick his brain and learn what I could,” said Caldwell.

The trip started on September 30, 2008, when Caldwell flew from Seattle, WA, for Monterey, CA, to help pack the gear. Then he flew with the photographer to Los Angeles, CA, on October 3. Caldwell had a long enough layover to visit with his father, step-mother, and grandmother there. Then they took the 15 hour red-eye to Sydney, Australia and then another five hour flight to Christchurch, New Zealand.

While in New Zealand for a week, Caldwell had a chance to visit the aquarium, fly-fish, and take a boat ride.

“New Zealand is such a beautiful country, lots of history to it,” he said. “I saw the New Zealand Alps and amazing scenery.”

It took another five hour flight to get to Antarctica, where the temperature was -15 degrees Fahrenheit that day. “My nose and lungs burned for a few minutes, and then the pain went away,” Caldwell said. “Getting off the plane on the frozen ocean all you see is white and bright. Mountain ranges all over as far as the eye can see. Mount Erebus is a live volcano the size of Mount Rainer puffing smoke from the live crater in the distance.”

Caldwell stayed at the McMurdo base, which he said “is just like a remote Army base.” The base has “a great chow hall,” store (limited), two lane bowling alley, a coffee shop, work shop, communication centers, internet,



Top left: AW2 Soldier Ryan Caldwell operating an underwater camera in Antarctica.

Bottom left: Caldwell took this picture of a seal pup yawning.

Top right: Caldwell stands in front of the helicopter used during his time in Antarctica.

Bottom right: Caldwell suits up for a dive in Little Razor Back, Antarctica.

phone, mail, dorms, library, AFN TV network, and three bars. He was required to go through many training courses, such as the “Happy Camper” course (for cold weather survival); helicopter training; radio procedures and vehicle movement course; ice vehicles course; and working, driving, diving, and movement on the ice sheets.

Caldwell had to take certain precautions while diving in Antarctica because of his injuries. He received shrapnel wounds from a mortar explosion in July 2004. He suffered a traumatic brain injury, hearing damage, and more shrapnel injuries from a car bomb in November 2004. His first dive site was called Little Razor Back and provided sightings of seals and penguins native to Antarctica.

“The water is amazing,” he said. “You can see forever until the light goes away from the little cracks in the ice. There is tons of life

down there. The Weddell seals swam around with us and sat in the shallows—what we call ice rooms—just hanging out for air. The Weddell seals were having baby pups. The pups are very, very cute only a couple hours old.”

He took around 1,000 photographs during his time there and enjoyed taking underwater and landscape photographs. He would like to carry on and make the transition from amateur to professional photographer. Currently he is saving up to buy more equipment.

“Just phenomenal, breath-taking and amazing. A trip of a lifetime,” he said.

If you would like to see more of Caldwell’s photographs, please visit his website at [photos.ohnunya.com/](http://photos.ohnunya.com/).

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## Purple Heart for a Deserving Soldier

*SGT Jonathan Lucas with his Family during his Purple Heart ceremony in December (bottom). GEN Allen Tackett pinned SGT Lucas with a Purple Heart at the ceremony (right).*



**A**W2 Soldier SGT Jonathan Lucas sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in 2004 but was not awarded a Purple Heart. AW2 Advocate and AW2 Soldier, Clay Rankin, realized that SGT Lucas' Purple Heart had fallen through the cracks. Rankin worked diligently with SGM Brent R. Jurgensen and Charles Williams at AW2 Headquarters to make sure Lucas received his Purple Heart. Through the combined efforts of AW2 Headquarters staff and the National Guard (NG), his official Purple Heart Ceremony was held.

Lucas was surrounded at the ceremony by friends and Family, many who travelled from out of state to be with him and several NG leaders. West Virginia Adjutant GEN Allen Tackett pinned the nation's oldest active military decoration on Lucas at the West Virginia National Guard Charlestown Army on December 15, 2008.

"It's taken a long time, far too long, to get this award," GEN Tackett said during the ceremony. "But we were never going to give up on getting this Soldier the recognition he deserved."

To read more about this event, visit the AW2 Blog on [www.AW2.army.mil](http://www.AW2.army.mil).